

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 18016 161242Z

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 OMB-01 PM-07 NSC-10

SS-20 DPW-01 DRC-01 /089 W
----- 116902

R 161012Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8102

INFO CINCPAC

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 18016

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MILI, VS

SUBJECT: GVN LOSS OF STRONG POINTS ON BACH MA MOUNTAIN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON FROM AMCONSUL DANANG OCT 16
REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION

QUOTE

P R 161030Z OCT 73

FM AMCONSUL DANANG

TO RUMJIR/AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY 3787

INFO RHMSMVA/USDAO SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L DANANG 1164

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS MILI VS

SUBJ: GVN LOSS OF STRONG POINTS ON BACH MA MOUNTAIN

REF: DANANG DTG 300410Z AUG 73

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 18016 161242Z

QM SUMMARY: ON THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 12 COMPANY (A) OF THE
112TH REGIONAL FORCE BATTALION WITHDREW FROM STRONG POINTS ON

BACH MA MOUNTAIN. THE LOSS OF THESE STRONG POINTS WAS THE RESULT OF A SERIES OF SHARP AND UNEXPECTED COMMUNIST ATTACKS LAUNCHED THE AFTERNOON OF OCTOBER 11 AND THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 12. GVN FORCES OCCUPIED BACH MA AFTER JANUARY CEASEFIRE AND HAVE BEEN PLAGUED BY SUPPLY PROBLEMS. THE ABANDONMENT OF BACH MA, ALTHOUGH A DISAPPOINTMENT TO MR-1 MILITARY PLANNERS, IS OF LITTLE IMMEDIATE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO I CORPS TOC BRIEFINGS, ELEMENTS OF THE 1ST COMPANY, 112TH RF BATTALION WERE DEPLOYED IN FIVE STRONG POINTS ON BACH MA AT ZC063927, ZC059929, ZC60926, ZC067925 AND ZC055925. TWO POSITIONS WERE ATTACKED BY FIRE AND PROBED BY COMMUNIST TROOPS THE AFTERNOON OF OCTOBER 11. CONTACT WITH THE 10-MAN POSITION AT ZC067925 AND A 17-MAN POSITION AT ZC055925 WAS LOST DURING THIS PROBE. THE REMAINING THREE POSITIONS WERE NOT ATTACKED. AT 0830 HOURS ON OCTOBER 12 THE COMMUNISTS RE-NEWED THEIR OFFENSIVE ATTACKING THESE THREE STRONG POINTS. AT 0910 HOURS CONTACT WITH THESE THREE POSITIONS WAS LOST. OF THE 83 MEN OF THE 1ST COMPANY, 112TH RF BATTALION DEPLOYED ON BACH MA MOUNTAIN TWO WERE KILLED, ELEVEN WOUNDED, 21 REPORTED AS MISSING IN ACTION. REMAINING 49 MEN OF THE 1ST COMPANY CONTINUED ON TO THE 112TH RG BATTALION'S HEADQUARTERS AT ZC062950. LATER IN THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 12 THE 3RD COMPANY OF THE 112TH BATTALION AT ZC067942 RECEIVED A SINGLE ROUND OF UNIDENTIFIED FIRE KILLING THE COMPANY COMMANDER AND WOUNDING ONE SOLDIER. AT 1030 HOURS THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE 112TH RF BATTALION 12 ROUNDS OF UNIDENTIFIED FIRE WITH NEGATIVE RESULTS.

3. THE BACH MA SECTOR HAD BEEN QUIET FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS WITH COMMUNIST ACTIVITY LIMITED TO THE METHODICAL EXTENSION OF THEIR TRENCH SYSTEM AND LOUD SPEAKER PROPAGANCA. IN MID-SEPTEMBER, COL PHAM VAN NGHIN, I CORPS G-3, COMMENTED THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAD EXTENDED THEIR TRENCH NETWORK TO WITHIN 30 METERS OF THE GOVERNMENT STRONG POINTS AND SUGGESTED THAT THE ENEMY WOULD PROBABLY ATTACK THE DEFENSIVE POSITIONS WHEN THE TIME WAS TIGHT. WEATHER CONDITIONS CREATED BY TYPHOON OPAL POSSIBLY PROVIDED A FAVORABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR COMMUNIST ELEMENTS TO LAUNCH THEIR SUCCESSFUL ATTACKS ON THE BACH MA
CONFIDENTIAL
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PAGE 03 SAIGON 18016 161242Z

DEFENSES.

4. THERE WERE NO GVN TROOPS DEPLOYED ON BACH MA AT THE TIME OF THE JANUARY 1973 CEASEFIRE. HOWEVER, THE GVN CONSIDERED THE SECTOR GVN TERRITORY BECAUSE GVN TROOPS WERE BELIEVED TO BE THE LAST FORCES TO OCCUPY THE MOUNTAIN PRIOR TO THE CEASE-FIRE. IN EARLY JUNE 1973 ELEMENTS OF THE 126TH RF BATTALION WERE DEPLOYED ON BACH MA TO SECURE A PLANNED RESETTLEMENT AREA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A ROAD TO SUPPLY THE BACH MA DEFENSES WAS INITIATED. THE COMMUNISTS DENOUNCED THIS DEPLOYMENT AS A

GVN CEASEFIRE VIOLATION.

5. COMMUNIST HARASSMENT SLOWED ENGINEERING EFFORTS AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE SUPPLY ROAD WAS FINALLY DISCONTINUED IN LATE AUGUST, WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THE ROAD COULD NOT BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO THE APPROACHING RAINY SEASON. IN MID-AUGUST COMMUNIST AUTOMATIC WEAPON AND SMALL ARMS FIRE MADE HELICOPTER RESUPPLY OF BACH MA NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE. VNAF LOUD SPEAKER AIRCRAFT WARNED THE COMMUNISTS THAT CONTINUED HARASSMENT OF RESUPPLY HELICOPTERS WOULD BE MET WITH TACTICAL AIR STRIKES. COMMUNIST GUNNERS DID NOT HEED THE WARNING AND ON 22 AUGUST VNAF A-37 AIRCRAFT STRUCK AUTOMATIC WEAPONS POSITIONS ON THE MOUNTAIN. THE COMMUNISTS APPEALED FOR AN END TO THE AIR STRIKES AND AGREED TO QUIT FIRING ON SUPPLY HELICOPTERS. BY EARLY SEPTEMBER, HOWEVER, WEATHER CONDITIONS FORCED THE DISCONTINUANCE OF HELICOPTER SUPPLY MISSIONS TO BACH MA. THEREAFTER SUPPLIES FOR THE BACH MA STRONG POINTS WERE TRANSPORTED ON THE BACKS OF THE DEFENDERS.

6. COMMENT: THE GVN APPARENTLY ABANDONED THE IDEA OF SECURING BACH MA DURING THE MONSOON SEASON WHEN THE SUPPLY ROAD COULD NOT BE COMPLETED. THE FACT THAT BACH MA WAS NOT OCCUPIED BY GVN TROOPS AT THE TIME THE CEASEFIRE WAS SIGNED, AND THE QUALITY OF TROOPS COMMITTED TO THE DEFENSE OF BACH MA, SUGGESTS THAT MR-1 MILITARY STRATEGISTS DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE MOUNTAIN IS OF GREAT TACTICAL OR STRATEGIC VALUE. WHILE BACH MA DOES OFFER A GOOD OBSERVATION POINT IN CLEAR WEATHER, IN THE MONSOON WEATHER CONDITIONS WHICH WILL PREVAIL FROM NOW UNTIL FEBRUARY VISIBILITY IS NIL AND BACH MA'S VALUE AS AN OBSERVATION POINT IS ZERO. ACCORDINGLY, IN OUR JUDGEMENT THE ABANDONMENT OF THIS OUTPOST IS OF LITTLE IMMEDIATE MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE.
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PAGE 04 SAIGON 18016 161242Z

END COMMENT.
POPPLE

END QUOTE
MARTIN

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NNN

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